

he was unwilling to contribute his own share to the genre, leaving the field to the violin virtuosos.

Mozart's delightful violin concertos of 1775 remained unplayed and virtually forgotten for almost a century. In the late nineteenth century, Joseph Joachim took the first step toward rediscovery by publishing the fourth and fifth concertos with cadenzas. Henri Marteau followed suit with Concerto No. 3 in 1906. Today, of course, performances of the complete cycle of five concertos are frequent. They are a delight to those listeners who—like Leopold Mozart—are not lovers of “excessively rapid passages.”

Ivo Supićić

Early Forms of Musical “Mass” Culture



In general, we speak about musical “mass” culture in terms of the music of the twentieth century and the phenomena associated with contemporary musical life; and even within this limited context, there is no shortage of viewpoints about the significance and meaning of the term. The term is usually applied to the field of entertainment and popular music, though nowadays it seems to be used with ever greater frequency in connection with “serious” or classical music, especially with respect to the diffusion and dissemination of such music through the mass media.¹

Not long ago, however, the question of *early* forms of musical “mass” culture was raised in a wider perspective—as to its significance, framework, and beginnings—and the concept was defined as the “performance or dissemination of music which does not rest upon personal relationships between musicians and public and for which obtaining—indeed, manipulating—a wide public is a primary goal. This is not just a matter of brute numbers of people buying music or going to concerts. What has characterized musical mass culture primarily has been rather the impersonality of relationships between listeners and performers and the active

¹ See for example, Denis McQuail, *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communication* (London, 1969); G. Friedman, “Rôle et place de la musique dans une société industrielle,” *Diogene*, 72 (1970), pp. 29–44; Helmut Rösing, “Zur Rezeption technisch vermittelter Musik. Psychologische, ästhetische und musikalisch-funktionsbezogene Aspekte,” *Musik in den Massenmedien Rundfunk und Fernsehen*, ed. Hans-Christian Schmidt (Mainz, 1976), pp. 44–66.

exploitation of a broad public by the music business."² So conceived, the early forms of musical "mass" culture would fall somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the time of the appearance and establishment of public interest in the music of the great Viennese classics, and at a time when the growth of publishing activities in the field of music assumed a new and important function in musical life.³

The problem of the "mass" character of a musical culture could be formulated still more broadly, not only by reference to some previous or contemporary "non-mass" phenomena in the musical culture under investigation—phenomena characterized by features that are different from or contrary to those which determine the musical "mass" culture in question—but also by reference to the individual aspects of any musical "mass" culture, and not just to the "mass" culture as a whole. In a certain sense, it could even be said that almost every age has had "mass" and "non-mass" forms of musical culture, at least in the sense that, on the one hand, there have been certain musical forms or genres that were performed and heard by small circles of the public, while, on the other hand, other forms or genres belonged to a larger audience and to broader social strata, this irrespective of whether we are dealing with art or folk music, or with music that merely entertained (though the last two ordinarily belonged to a larger public). Where the "mass" or "non-mass" character of a musical culture or an aspect of it stops and where it begins is a problem which can be solved only by analysis of specific data concerning a determined epoch and its cultural and social frameworks. Here a methodological question arises, namely whether it is possible or not to establish uniform criteria or common determinants of the "mass" character of a musical culture, either in its entirety or one of its parts, for all historical periods, or whether the criteria-determinants should be considered with flexibility and with reference to the various and variable historical conditions and to the elements they contain, in the frames of which—through their specific features—the more or less varied phenomena of the musical cultures of different social milieus can be designated as "mass" or "non-mass" phenomena.

² William Weber, "Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770-1870," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, VIII (1977), pp. 6-7.

³ Weber, "Mass Culture," pp. 5-6.

This last, rather pragmatic point of view seems to be more adequate in historical research, as it permits a broadening of the problem across a greater number of historical periods as well as an insight into the "mass" or "non-mass" character of diverse spheres of musical life in all social strata and groups—from folk and popular music to art music, in the strict sense, and those of its genres and forms which were traditionally reserved for social minorities and, consequently, for more or less narrow audiences. Such a perspective would permit a historical study of the reception of particular musical compositions—whether works of individual composers or some musical genre in general—with reference to their success and "popularity" with the public, that is, their limited or "mass" acceptance. Such a consideration could be important and interesting in a social history of musical life and culture.

However, if one remains within the territory of European art music of recent centuries, it could be taken for granted that the first step toward a "mass" character appears with the development of public concerts. Contrary to the earlier private amateur performances and private concerts of a "closed type," first in court and aristocratic milieus and homes, and later in bourgeois houses, and contrary to the earlier intervening types of semi-public concerts, these being devoted mainly to chamber music, the public concerts of the second half of the eighteenth century denoted the first clear-cut movement toward what could be called, even then, a "mass" form of musical life. And there are several pieces of evidence to support this contention.

The years around 1770 witnessed a number of important turning-points in European musical life, some of which were linked in part to the flourishing activity in music publishing. It was at that time that the middle class became more and more unsatisfied with its social status. Changes in the financial position of the musician became more pronounced. As Barry Brook has emphasized, "this period marked the culmination of a long process in which music was transformed from a semi-feudal craft serving church, town and court, into a free-enterprise profession supplying predominantly bourgeois markets."⁴ The music profession followed the

⁴ Barry S. Brook, "Piracy and Panacea in the Dissemination of Music in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, CII (1975-1976), p. 13.

movements in other social spheres, and was increasingly penetrated by liberated entrepreneurship, which supplied the developing market according to the evermore pronounced laws of supply and demand, laws which also began to influence cultural life in specific ways. In the last quarter of the century, the role and the function of patronage started to decline. "An intensification of concert life and opera production all over Europe, as well as an unprecedented growth of commercial opportunities in aspects of music distribution such as copying, engraving, and printing, made it possible for countless composers and performers of independent spirit to practise their profession without recourse to traditional types of patronage."⁵ The nature of the musician and the character of the musical work are decided more and more directly on the podiums of public concerts and within the framework of a musical life that is progressively more commercialized, organized for a predominantly new, middle-class public and, of course, for the still important aristocratic public; no longer was the musician and his work subject mainly to the fading importance of the private aristocratic residences in which the musician was only or almost a servant: Haydn at Esterháza or Mozart in Salzburg. Composers depended less and less on noble patrons.

The frequency, and sometimes the quality, of programs, with respect to both concert and opera performances, grew in general terms along with the growth of the commercial entrepreneurship in the field of music distribution, which in turn became less dependent on copying and ever more closely associated with the growing young industry of engraving and printing. The abandonment of the shelter of traditional aristocratic patronage was accompanied by the evolution of hitherto non-existent possibilities and freedom of choice in a whole series of professional musical activities. These possibilities were exploited by a growing number of musicians. The mobility of the musical profession became more important; the social status of the musician was no longer so rigidly defined; and the "mobility" of music itself and of its effects and influences grew to a previously unknown extent. The influence of printing and music publishing is seen not only in the field of the dissemination of and acquaintance with music—through the publishing of a musical work—but through broader social and geographical frames; for along with the greater movement of musicians from one country to another and their more

⁵ Brook, "Piracy and Panacea," pp. 13–14.

frequent personal contacts, extensive music publishing contributed to the increased mutual influence of musical styles and individual composers, not only within their own countries, but beyond national boundaries as well. Publishing activity thus had important consequences at the musical-artistic level. In this upheaval the leading roles were played by France, England, and The Netherlands.

The great influence of music publishing at that time had several causes and can be considered an expression of larger events in the society and culture of the most developed countries of Europe. This epoch in music history is marked by a phenomenon which will come to dominate it to an ever greater degree—*repetitiveness*, which Jacques Attali places at the end of the nineteenth century in terms of general social relationships,⁶ though it appears in musical life much earlier, in the last decades of the eighteenth century. This is evident in, among other things, the field of music publishing. The unique quality of the musical event slowly disappears; its limitation with respect to frequency begins to decrease, and its restriction to a special or unique occasion is undermined. The principle of repetitiveness leads the "consumption" of a piece of music toward a series of occasions and opportunities for performance in which there is movement away from the control of the composer (that is, a performance under his leadership), his determination and even knowledge of the place of performance, the circumstances of performance, and the performers themselves. Thus, to cite but one example, Haydn lamented in 1768 that it was difficult for him to compose a cantata for a monastery in Austria since he did not know "either the persons, or the place."⁷ If the quantitative growth of music and its dissemination had sociological causes—greater freedom for the composer, a larger public, the economic stimulus from publishing, engraving, and printing—they also had definite consequences: further dissemination and broadening of the public, the increased repetitiveness of a musical presentation from one occasion to another, a great stimulus toward musical amateurism, and, finally, stronger incentives for commercial activities that were themselves connected with music

⁶ Jacques Attali. *Bruits, Essai sur l'économie politique de la musique* (Paris, 1977), pp. 64–65.

⁷ Cited in Michel Coster, "L'art mass-médiatisé. L'exemple de la musique classique enregistrée," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, VI (1975) pp. 257.

and musical life. Repetitiveness led step by step to the organization of a whole commercial net or chain of all those agents who played an active role in its further affirmation: printers, engravers, publishers, merchants and salesmen, manufacturers of instruments, organizers of musical life, and others.

In fact, as long as the creation and performance of art music rested upon the principle of strict and determined functionality and a specific extra-musical occasion or motive, as well as the individual demand or command of employer or patron, particular musical works were not only performed, but often even composed clearly and expressly in terms of that demand or command, that is, in terms of the function that they had to assume and the occasion for which they were submitted and bent. Any further performances depended almost entirely on circumstances of the same or similar kind to provoke or permit them. Bach, for instance, would employ a previously performed cantata only if he had not composed a new one for the new occasion, and only if the one that he had previously composed was suitable for the new occasion or circumstances of performance. Thus, one cannot say that there was a market—in the strict sense of the word—for the numerous liturgical works that were composed for the aristocracy and the churches during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. If, on the other hand, some secular genres, such as the French chanson, had a market—though a limited one—as early as the Renaissance, this was a result both of the existence of an amateur music public, which was pleased to hear and even to sing the chansons, and of the transmission of the genre in printed editions that appeared from the beginning of the sixteenth century: Ottaviano Petrucci in Venice, Pierre Attaignant in Paris. Jacques Moderne in Lyons, and Tielman Susato in Antwerp.

If it is true, as was stressed by William Weber, that in the eighteenth century “relationships between performers and their patrons were . . . the central source of social order in musical life [and that the] key to success for musicians was not expanding the number of such ties but rather maintaining them with careful diplomacy in the small-group social context of the time,”⁸ it is also true that in the last third of the century composers sought a widening of their public and of their artistic affirmation outside the shelter of patronage and narrow social groups, something to which music

⁸ Weber, “Mass Culture,” p. 8.

publishing certainly contributed. That very aspect should be viewed as the beginning of the early forms of musical “mass” culture, and it should be situated in this period, not—as claims Weber—in the middle of the nineteenth century. Neither should the phenomenon be related to that of repetitiveness in general social relationships as defined by Attali, who placed it at the end of the nineteenth century, though it might fairly contribute to his thesis that events in music history are “forerunners” of events in general history.⁹ Even if we accept Weber’s definition of musical “mass” culture, it should be remarked that from the late eighteenth century on music publishing was one of the essential elements of the “mass” character of musical culture: first of all, in the impersonal character of the relationships between musicians and the public, between whom printed music increasingly became the mediator; secondly, in composers’ addressing a greater number of listeners, particularly important among whom were musical amateurs, for whom an increasing quantity of music was intended; and, finally, in the commercial exploitation of music, in almost the complete sense of the word (not only as investment in the music business in order to obtain profit, but also as an influence on the musical market, the taste of the public, and the composing and performing of works for the greatest profit).

When William Weber speaks of early forms of musical mass culture—thus utilizing a term which was invented in and for our time—¹⁰ in European musical life from about 1770 to 1870, it is not a question of an unjustified retrospective use of the term, though some of his conclusions should be accepted with reservations. First, it would be more appropriate to see the term, when applying it to previous epochs, within quotation marks; for one cannot say that early forms of our own musical mass culture, at least as they concerned “serious” or “classical” music, could have constituted—in comparison with that of today—anything more than a musical “mass” culture that was severely limited with respect to its number of listeners, its commercial exploitation of music, and its impersonality of relationships. Secondly, limited though they may have been, these phenomena existed, not only from the mid-nineteenth century, but from the last decades of the eighteenth century. Thus Weber’s conception should be both

⁹ Attali, *Bruits*, p. 22.

¹⁰ Weber, “Mass Culture,” p. 6.

broadened and narrowed. For instance, although the relationships between musicians and their employers or patrons, who were at the same time the principal audience and the most privileged members of the public, remained personal through most of the eighteenth century, there was, with the development of the public concert and the appearance of a more or less anonymous public, a tendency for the musician-public relationship to become depersonalized toward the end of that century, be it a question of public-performer or, even more so, of public-composer. Inversely, the public-musician relationship remained personal in the sense that the public generally knew the musicians who played for it. If the public of the time knew the composer in most cases, the composer no longer knew his public as he had before: the greater the distance at which his compositions were performed, the less he knew his public. Finally, with respect to the question of the number of listeners as a criterion of the "mass" character of a musical culture, it may be taken into account in a double sense, with reference to a greater public in comparison with other contemporary centers of musical life (for example, public concert halls vs. aristocratic salons), or with reference to its lesser quantitative importance in former times. On the other hand, it would be an indefensible retrospective projection to conclude that the musical cultures of earlier periods had no "mass" features simply because those features were not similar to those present in the musical culture of the twentieth century, when the musical public is both absolutely and relatively more numerous than it has ever before been, or because in earlier times the technical mass media simply did not exist as they do today.

Before the development of the public concert, the personal character of the relationships between musicians and the public, and particularly between musicians and their employers or patrons, was an inescapable and dominant fact. For the musicians these relationships meant gratifying demands and commands, and doing so in accordance with the taste and wishes either of the people in whose service they were engaged or of those who could pay both for the composition and for the performance that the music required. All of this was a function of personal, family, and court events, meetings, receptions, and celebrations within a restricted circle of people—and we are speaking of relatively small groups—in which music was especially appreciated, favored, and supported, not only for aesthetic and artistic motives, but also for

reasons of social prestige, respect, and recognition. Musical amateurism in the middle-class milieu also took place in the eighteenth century in the non-anonymous circles of family and friends, where personal relationships between participants and audience were even closer and more direct, unburdened by official distance and court etiquette.

When, during the eighteenth century, the size of audiences at public concerts began to grow, personal relationships were still essential to their organization. If, under such circumstances, it was almost impossible to arrange concerts for more than five hundred people,¹¹ this was so because typical public concerts of that period were organized under the auspices of various amateur societies and academies, and often as benefit concerts that were put together essentially upon a basis of personal relationships and with the support of a public made up of friends, colleagues, and relatives. Thus even the public concert of the eighteenth century rested to some extent upon personal relationships as the social link and basis of musical life.

In the late eighteenth century things began to change. Early forms of musical "mass" culture manifested themselves first of all and to the highest degree in the largest European urban conglomerations, where the concentration of population was greatest, London and Paris. It is thus quite understandable that it was in these very cities that both the principal conditions for the early appearance of musical "mass" culture and the important development of music publishing were found. The entire situation, then, offers a remarkable example of an important development in the musical life of an epoch, "in the creation of which *social* factors played the dominant role," one that, to quote Brook, "was more the 'resultant of anonymous forces,' to use Barzun's phrase, than of purely musical ones."¹²

¹¹ See Weber, "Mass Culture," p. 9.

¹² Brook, "The Symphonie Concertante: Its Musical and Sociological Bases," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, VI (1975) p. 27.